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TCS #2386/64-KH
PID/ABCB 112/64
4 June 1964
Copy #

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Atomic/Biological/Chemical Division, OSI

ATTENTION: [REDACTED] 25X1A

THROUGH: Chief, Requirements Branch, Reconnaissance Group, CGS

FROM: Chief, CIA/PID(NPIC)

SUBJECT: Search for Uranium Mines & Mills Within 50 Nautical Miles of Kashgar, Sinkiang Province, China

REFERENCES: Requirement No. OSI/R-198/62
CIA Project No. C 877-62

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1. This memorandum updates a manuscript prepared (28 Nov 62) for and read by [REDACTED] who succeeded the requestor the late [REDACTED], probably during the visit of the former to NPIC on 11 December 1962. This informal memorandum is now submitted to clear the record here of all past projects on this subject not previously covered by a report or informal memoranda.
2. Your requirement, C-SI3-80,640, answered by TCS #4621/63-KH - PID/ABCB 237/63, of 23 October 1963, for a search of the Tarim River basin, failed to reveal any evidence of atomic energy activity other than the suspect atomic energy research institute 15.5 nautical miles (nm) NNE of Kashgar.
3. Careful search of seven KEYHOLE missions over an area of 10,400 square miles of the greater Kashgar region, China, resulted in the location of three potential uranium-thorium mining districts; and the Kok Chaj coal mining district, 39-48N 75-18E, seemingly unrelated to uranium mining. KEYHOLE photography failed to reveal activity at the numerous metalliferous deposits reported by V. M. Sinitsyn, in his geological book and map, "The Northwest Part of the Tarim Basin," Moscow, 1957, Unclassified. Very few roads enter the mountains from any direction, an indication that no important mining camps are to be found in the wild remote and inhospitable region.
4. According to V. M. Sinitsyn, the rare alkaline igneous rocks of the Maidan Mountain-Toyun basin, 40-20N 75-25E, drew the attention of Russian petrologists in 1942-43 even during World War II. In

Declassification Review by NIMA/DOD

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diggings were observed near the summits of stratified dark rocks at the twin "buttes" at 40-19N 75-28E. 25X1D

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a small open pit, and a

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camp site are located northeast of the twin "buttes". Possible older mines along the highway, 40-23N 75-17E, appeared to be inactive. Photography of indicated that the district had been shut down possibly for the winter. Two new small gridded areas, possibly for prospecting a small stream valley draining the area, had been laid out east of the road which leads southward to the Kok Chaj bituminous coal mining district. Little if any mining could be seen between heavy clouds in the area on

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, but the grids appeared to have been extended slightly farther to the south. An unknown amount (possibly on the order of 5 to 10,000 tons) of hand sorted (cobbled) ore has probably been trucked northward over difficult mountain roads to the uranium ore yard at Rybachy'e, Kirgiz SSR. Presumably, these ores, dug from surface workings, would be high in their metal content. The idling of the mill in the Turug Art pass and the mines to the south (both close to the Sino-Soviet frontier) may be associated with the political difficulties between the USSR and China..

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5. KEYHOLE photography of showed a sand digging and sieving camp, six possible sinuous shallow pits, and ten rectangular black sand piles located near the Ala Kum Desert at 38-46N 77-22E, north of the city of Yarkand, 38-26N 77-15E. An enclosed area containing two possible explosives storage facilities is located on the west side of the district. The ten rectangular piles of black sand remained unchanged until on photography of it was noted that only scars indicating their former presence remained. The black sands probably were bagged and trucked to the airstrip northeast of Yarkand, whence they were flown to treatment plants. On 25X1D

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small unidentified dark spots were visible at the end of the airstrip, which possibly has a black sand shipping facility. The geological map of V. M. Sinitsyn shows that the extent of radioactive crystalline rocks is small, though as seen on photography, it is deeply eroded, limiting the quantity of black sands furnished the ancestral Yarkand River. Timber heaps, described by G. V. Zakharina, rooted out into blackened piles by the saline soil amelioration program, are not to be confused with the carefully excavated, sieved and systematically piled black sands. It is estimated that about one mile of four different systems of winding channels have been excavated, perhaps over an average width of 20 to 30 feet. Probably only a small proportion of all the channel fill excavated was eventually concentrated (sieved and jigged) to be shipped as heavy black sand. 25X1D

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photography showed that construction was in progress on a small mill in the Turug Art pass, 40-30N 75-23E. On 25X1D

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when last seen, the mines and mill appeared laid up for the winter.

6. It may be concluded that the outlook for future discoveries of uranium and thorium deposits in the greater Kashgar region, is seen to be quite good as the geological formations are quite varied (the coal-bearing deposits represent the eastern extension of the uraniferous deposits of the Fergana Valley, USSR) and the mountains are deeply eroded. There appears to be a need for more prospecting of all kinds. The lack of factories manufacturing mining equipment, the absence of uranium and thorium plants, and the difficult climatic and rugged mountain conditions seem to indicate that the Kashgar region will be a marginal producer of uranium and thorium for many years to come, even if the Sino-Soviet political-economic relations should improve.

7. The following materials were utilized in work performed on this project:

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Documents

Sinit'syn, V.M. Severo-zapadnaya chast Tarim'skogo basseyna (Northwest Part of the Tarim Basin): Academy Sciences, USSR, Geological Institute, Moscow, 1957. Unclassified

Zakhar'ina, G.V. Salinated Soils of Southern Sinchiang and Their Amelioration, JPRS 15,084, 31 Aug 1962, p. 113. Unclassified

TCS #2386/64-KH
Page 4

25X1A

25X1A 8. The photo analyst on this project was [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] He may be contacted on extension 3472 should you have
further questions regarding this requirement.

9. This memorandum completes the referenced requirement.

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